



The Board of Park and Recreation Commissioners of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, met at Col. Francis Beatty Park in the Lakepointe Hall, located at 4330 Weddington Road, Matthews, NC on October 13, 2015 at 6 p.m.

PRC MINUTES October 13, 2015

ATTENDANCE

PRC Present:

Elaine Powell, Chair
 Kendel Bryant, Vice Chair
 Tristan McMannis, Exec. Secretary
 Doug Burnett
 John Leonard
 Ed Barnhart
 Aubin Guinness
 Abe Early
 Heidi Pruess
 Brian Cox
 Jim Garges, Director, Park and Recreation
 Michael Kirschman, Deputy Director, Park and Recreation

PRC Absent:

Sheryl Smith
 Vacant – Central 2
 Vacant – North 2

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Elaine Powell, which was followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Welcome and Introductions:

Chair Powell welcomed all to the October 2015 PRC meeting and asked each Commissioner/Staff person to introduce themselves.

Program Presentation: Therapeutic Recreation – Karla Gray

Karla Gray, Therapeutic Recreation Manager, introduced herself and shared that the Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Division of Park and Recreation is made up of herself and 8 other licensed Recreation Therapist/Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist as required by State and Federal

law for Therapeutic Recreation. Karla made a presentation to the PRC which covered the following:

- The TR Division has four primary focus areas for the Department and the community:
 - Provide programs for people with disabilities
 - Provide an environment and opportunities for inclusion
 - Insure ADA compliance for facilities and programs
 - Professional development, training and education for staff and others
- The Department's TR program is not only law (ADA) but it is the right thing to do.
- Participants in the Department's TR programs range in age from 2 to 89 years of age.
- The TR Division's Paralympics Sports Club – Metrolina is a Paralympics program in partnership with the USOC US Paralympics Division and is currently a Silver Level Club of Excellence.
- Charlotte will be hosting the US Paralympics Trials for swimming, track and field and cycling June 30 – July 2, 2016.
- The TR Division offers TR Sports programs with more than 80 players participating. The division also works in partnership with other TR sports programming in the community including: the Rolling Hornets Wheelchair Basketball, Special Olympics of Mecklenburg County, Wheelchair Rugby and Getting to Tri.
- The Division also provides social programming to help participants with social participation and establishing friendships, outdoor programs and cultural arts programs.
- Addition focus includes the importance of early intervention, adult day programs, summer camp opportunities and community inclusion/integration.

Staff Presentation – Bikepath Country Sponsorship Program – Michael Kirschman

Michael Kirschman, Deputy Director, made a Bikepath Country Sponsorship Program follow up presentation to the Park and Recreation Commission after the initial presentation at the August PRC meeting and subsequent presentations to the Greenway Advisory Council, as requested by the Commission, regarding the proposed Bikepath Country Sponsorship Program. The Greenway Advisory Council endorsed the program 4 to 1. Michael shared that he made changes to his original presentation for the Greenway Advisory Council to more clearly present the intentions of the Department for revenue received through the proposed Bikepath program. The intent of the Department is to establish a Capital Reserve Account for Greenways into which all revenue from the program would go for greenway minor repairs and improvements. Michael further reminded the Commission of the Department's vision for this pilot program: no more than 12 locations, 2 year initial agreement and to assess the program at the end of the two years through surveys and public feedback. The updated presentation also showed the different areas the Department is currently using sponsorship signage. Also included in the handouts to the PRC was an example of the Greenville Health System sponsorship of the 10 mile Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville, SC. This sponsorship is a 10 year agreement at \$100,000 dollars per year to the Greenville County Rec Department; an example of the potential value of a good sponsorship. (**NOTE:** The updated presentation and Swamp Rabbit Trail handout are included in the October 13, 2015 PRC Minutes Binder, **Section 4b**, housed in the Directors office.)

Following Michael's presentation, discussion followed and included the following concerns and information:

Greenway Advisory Council Feedback: Chair Powell asked Commissioner Burnett to share what the Greenway Advisory Council liked about the proposed program and to also share what their concerns were. Commissioner Burnett shared that the Greenway Advisory Council liked the opportunity to obtain the wayfinding signs (sooner, rather than later), avoid funding from the operating budget, have full control over the sign design, ability to approve the “sponsor” and that Park and Recreation would be installing the signs. The Council’s concerns were advertising on public space and the concerns of where this type of program starts and where does it stop.

Sponsorship versus Advertising: Commissioner Barnhart expressed his view that there is and should be a distinct difference between a sponsorship and naming rights, such as the Greenville Heath System Swamp Rabbit Trail where the sponsor provides financial support and advertising, where a third party vendor makes money through the program, such as the Bikepath Country Sponsorship Program. Commissioner Barnhart felt the program should be referred to as the “Bikepath Country Advertising Program”. Commissioner Barnhart further expressed that he felt the distinction must be made because while the Department may have a need for an advertising program, he felt we also need viable sponsors. Director Garges shared that all sponsorship opportunities are unique to the individual situation and based on the level of return (BB&T Ball Park for instance) saying that the Department has worked diligently to obtain sponsors without a great deal of success, which, makes consideration of programs like Bikepath a good revenue option for the Department.

County Policy Regarding Sponsorship: Commissioner Pruess inquired about the County’s sponsorship policy. Deputy Kirschman responded that the County’s policy is broad regarding sponsorship. Tobacco and Fire Arms sponsors are not allowed. Outside of this, however, the Department could use any sponsor but would only choose those that represent our mission and vision, such as a health care provider, for example. Michael reminded the Commission that the Department currently has sponsorship signs and advertising on our athletic fields, b-cycle stations, and dog park fencing, just not currently on greenways. Chair Powell reiterated that staff would have absolute control over who would be considered as sponsors and asked for the Department’s continued mindfulness to select sponsors that would fit in with the Department’s healthy philosophy.

Bikepath Sponsors for P&R: Commissioner McMannis inquired if Bikepath has secured sponsors for the Department and would the Department realize any financial obligation if those sponsors did not receive expected returns. Michael Kirschman responded that Bikepath already has willing sponsors for all 12 signs. The only interest the sponsors have is the amount of pedestrian traffic to which their signs are exposed. We are under no obligation for their financial return.

Non-Profits: Commissioner Pruess expressed a concern that this type of program would possibly prohibit partnerships with non-profits because they would not be able to pay. Director Garges responded that our strongest non-profit partnership is with Partners for Parks and also with Carolina Thread Trail since many of our greenways are part of the Thread Trail. Most non profits typically are looking for the Department to provide for them, mainly, in the form of fee waivers and request for use of our facilities for their own purposes. The Department does not get into these types of partnerships.

3rd Party Profits: Commissioner Barnhart shared that he had a problem with a 3rd party vendor using public, tax payer supported property for profit. Michael Kirschman shared that should the

PRC endorse the program he could pitch a 50/50 or possibly 51/50 revenue sharing options to Bikepath.

Future Funding Concerns: Commissioner Guinness wondered if our creative and innovative funding sources might cause the Department to lose funding priority through our normal funding channels. Director Garges said that in the current political environment, the more creative and innovative we are at funding sources, the better we will do.

Motion was made by Commissioner Barnhart to call the program a Greenway Advertising Program, which was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Cox for the Park and Recreation Commission to endorse staffs plan and approve moving forward as presented with 12 signs at specified locations, a 2- year agreement and the establishment of a Greenway Capital Reserve Account and to negotiate the best rate possible with Bikepath Country, which was seconded by Commissioner Bryant and approved unanimously.

Appointments – Advisory Councils –Applicants

Greenway Advisory Council: **Motion was made** by Commissioner Barnhart to increase the membership number of the Greenway Advisory Council from 8 members to 9 members, which was seconded by Commissioner Pruess and approved unanimously. **Motion was made** by Commissioner Barnhart to appoint **Kevin Walsh** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2016 and to appoint **Charlie McRee** to a 1st full term expiring 6/2018, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

North Advisory Council: Commissioner Bryant asked to place the application of Anita Brown on the agenda and **made the motion** to appoint **Anita Brown** to a 1st full term expiring 6/2018, which was seconded by Commissioner Pruess and approved unanimously.

South Advisory Council: **Motion was made** by Commissioner Barnhart to appoint **Brian Groves** to an unexpired term, expiring 6/2016, which was seconded by Commissioner Burnett and approved unanimously.

Director's Report

Capital Projects: Lee Jones, Division Director of Capital Planning, provided the PRC with a hand out of all current, active, funded Park and Recreation projects. Lee brought specific attention to the following:

- **1st Ward Park:** This Park will be substantially complete by December 4. Look for a soft opening ceremony on December 8, 2015.
- **Mecklenburg County Sports Complex at Matthews Phase II:** Recent rains created storm water issues but is now is moving ahead very quickly and should be substantially complete in October 2016.
- **Aquatic Center:** This project is underway and on schedule. Look for completion by May of 2016.
- **LSC GW:** The Little Sugar Creek Greenway stretch from Uptown Charlotte to the South Carolina line will be substantially complete by 2018.

- **Latta Nature Center**: A site walk was conducted to determine the location of the new Latta Nature Center in conjunction with the Raptor Center. The location will be near the existing facility to utilize existing utilities and infrastructure.
- **Stevens Creek Nature Preserve**: Rezoning has been approved by Mint Hill.
- **West Charlotte Recreation Center/Hornet's Nest Barn/Veterans Park Indoor Schedule**: These projects have been bundled as one project and a pre-bid conference last week resulted in between 8 and 9 contractors showing interest as opposed to only 2 showing interest when these were put out to bid as individual projects.
- **Double Oaks Family Aquatic Center**: The land exchange has been finalized. A conference call has been with the consultant and team members to discuss when construction can begin.

Commissioner Leonard asked how we address what the Master Plan calls for and the citizen wish list for a project in light of unique challenges that arise. Lee Jones and Michael Kirschman shared that we work many projects in phases and also collaborate with our partners on various portions of a project to provide what is called for in the Master Plan and to meet citizens' expectations. Director Garges added that the Department will "value engineer" parts of a project where it would not make a substantial difference in the end product. For example, the Department would not "value engineer" the number of ball fields called for in a project from 3 to 2, nor would we "value engineer" to an inferior product. Before we reduce the scope of a project, or not do a project at all, the Department would ask the County Manager for additional funds.

Commissioner Cox inquired about funding for the projects listed on the handout and said he would gladly advocate for project funding to the County Commissioners. Director Garges explained that capital projects are approved in concept by the BOCC for a three year period, but the funding for each of those three years is done with the fiscal budget at which time the Department may ask for additional funding as needed or add a new project, such as the Queens tennis project.

PRC Meetings: The November meeting is set for November 10, 2015 at 6 p.m. and will be at the Administrative Office Building on Brookshire Blvd. We do not have a meeting in December.

1st Ward Park Opening: Everyone is invited to attend the 1st Ward Park opening on December 8. The opening will be during the day and will also include holiday evening activities. Invitation will go out in the near future.

Master Plan: The updated 2008 Master Plan was endorsed by the BOCC on October 6. The next step is to present the Master Plan to the towns and to the City of Charlotte.

Park Road Park Playground/Christian Symbol: A small cross on the depiction of a "town scene" in the playground at Park Road Park was removed after a citizen contacted a County Commissioner to complain of its offensiveness. Because of the separation of church and state, Director Garges felt the right thing to do was to have the cross removed and wanted the PRC to be aware of this situation. The playground was designed by the children of Pinewood Elementary in remembrance of the lives lost at the New Town tragedy.

Waymer Center Update: Chair Powell asked Director Garges to give an update on the Waymer Center. Jim shared that the Waymer Center is a leased facility in Huntersville and is part of the historic Torrence-Lytle School; the first African-American high school in Huntersville. The Waymer Center is at the point of needing a total renovation or being demolished. The

recommendation of the Department was to demolish the building and add amenities to the park, which was met with opposition from the Pottstown community. Meetings followed with the residents and Huntersville has since agreed to work with the Historic Landmarks Commission to renovate the Torrence-Lytle School, however, it is apparent that the residents do not place their trust in this promise. Ultimately the fate of the Waymer Center will be the County Manager's decision. Another meeting will be held, which will include the County Manager and the Huntersville Town Manager among others. Jim feels it will be very important for Huntersville to explain to the residents what their plans are for Torrence-Lytle and for that community. **(NOTE:** This meeting has since been set for November 10 at 6 p.m. at the Huntersville Town Hall.

PRC Chair Report:

Vehicle Acquisitions: Chair Powell expressed great concern regarding the timeliness of acquiring vehicles for the Department which have been approved in the budget. Director Garges explained the process for acquiring a vehicle which is lengthy and does take time. Commissioner Cox added that, from his experience, once the budget is approved, Departments begin making their request right away and often there are administrative and financial processes that must occur first, which does cause delays unfortunately. Elaine expressed her desire for effective, efficient government.

Hospital Shuttle Driver: Chair Powell shared that while in Richmond, VA helping with the care of her nephew, she asked the hospital shuttle driver if he would take her to a park. He responded that he had never been asked that before, but that he thought it was a wonderful idea and was going to look into it.

Consent Items

Commissioner Cox inquired about the purchase of a Kubota from a Capital Reserve Account. Deputy Director, Michael Kirschman responded that staff is allowed to use Capital Reserve funds for the purchase of equipment and repairs.

Motion was made by Commissioner Cox to approve all correspondence items, which was seconded by Commissioner Barnhart and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to approve the PRC minutes of September 8, 2015, which was seconded by Commissioner Barnhart and approved unanimously.

Motion was made by Commissioner Pruess to approve the Advisory Council Minutes received, which was seconded by Commissioner Cox and approved unanimously.

PRC Reports and Requests

PRC Retreat: Chair Powell suggested that it would be beneficial for the PRC, especially for new members, to have a retreat to cover the role of PRC and to learn about the many Department processes. All felt this would be beneficial. A sub-committee was formed consisting of Commissioners Powell, Burnett, Leonard and Cox to plan the agenda. Staff will assist with the planning and asked that everyone provide the subcommittee with any items they would like to have covered at the retreat. The retreat will be in early January of 2016.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.